

Well-being at work: how to cope with stress?

Göran Kenttä



1

Why care for oneself at first...

- "For someone to develop genuine compassion towards others, first he or she must have a basis upon which to cultivate compassion, and that basis is the ability to connect to one's own feelings and to care for one's own welfare. **Caring for others requires caring for oneself.**"

[Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama]

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The Nature of High Performance Coaching



- **Culture of HP sport** (Olusoga & Kenttä, 2017)
 - Mental toughness **vs.** vulnerability and help-seeking
- **Job Insecurity** (Bentzen et al., 2020)
- **Long irregular hours** (Norris et al., 2017)
- **Work-Home Interference** (Bentzen et al., 2016)
- **Prioritize ATHLETE well-being** (Olusoga et al., 2012)

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13 different position statements...



Review

A systematic review and meta-synthesis of mental health position statements in sport: Scope, quality and future directions

Stewart A. Vella^a, Matthew J. Schweickle^a, Jordan T. Sutcliffe^{a,c}, Christian Swann^b

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Who cares about the coach?

Psychology of Sport & Exercise 55 (2021) 102946



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Psychology of Sport & Exercise

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/psychsport

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International Sport Coaching Journal, (Ahead of Print)
<https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2022-0123>
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 PRACTICAL ADVANCES

Position Paper: Rationale for a Focused Attention on Mental Health of High-Performance Sports Coaches

Göran Kenttä,^{1,2,3} Kristen Dieffenbach,⁴ Marte Bentzen,^{5,6} Melissa Thompson,⁷ Jean Côté,^{8,9} Cliff Mallett,^{9,10} and Peter Olsusoga^{11,12}

¹The Swedish School of Sport & Health Sciences, Stockholm, Sweden; ²The Swedish Sports Confederation, Stockholm, Sweden; ³University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada; ⁴Center for Applied Coaching and Sport Sciences, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, USA; ⁵Department of Sport and Social Sciences, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo, Norway; ⁶Norway School of Business, University of South-Eastern Norway, Oslo, Norway; ⁷School of Kinesiology and Nutrition, The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, USA; ⁸Queen's University, Kingston, ON, Canada; ⁹The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia; ¹⁰Technical University of Munich, Munich, Germany; ¹¹Centre for Behavioural Science and Applied Psychology, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, United Kingdom; ¹²Trondheim Norway University of Applied Sciences, Hamar, Norway

High-performance (HP) coaching has been described as “a complex, social, and dynamic activity that is not easily represented as a set of tangible and predictable processes.” Coaches are not only responsible for extensive planning, monitoring, and leadership in a dynamic and complex environment but also have responsibility for supporting athlete development and safeguarding their athletes’ overall health, well-being, and psychological and physiological safety. However, HP coaching is often considered an unsustainable profession, due to the levels of stress and subsequent mental health challenges that are frequently part of the role. Therefore, this position paper will focus on the concerns, challenges, and resources needed to prevent and manage mental ill-being and support the mental well-being of sport coaching professionals in HP sport, and provide recommendations for individuals, systems, and organizations that work with HP sport coaches.

Q1

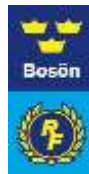
Q2

Keywords: well-being, ill-being, stress, sustainability

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Self-Compassion – A Key Strategy to Support Mental Health, Well-Being and Sustainability among High-Performance Coaches

Göran Kenttä &
Karin Hägglund



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Why self-compassion is important in sports?

(Cormier et al., 2023; Mosewich et al., 2011)

Low self-compassion has been associated with several **detrimental** psychological factors in sports, such as ...

Anxiety, depression, disordered eating, burnout

Fear of failure, shame and self-criticism

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Why self-compassion is important in sports?

(Cormier et al., 2023; Mosewich et al., 2011)

High self-compassion has been associated with several **beneficial** psychological factors in sport, such as ...

Psychological well-being, self-determination,
striving for excellence

Mindfulness, self-care and overcoming set-backs

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The three dimensions of self-compassion (Neff, 2003)

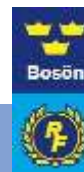


1. **Self-kindness** versus **self-criticism**: how warm-hearted, caring, and understanding *or* how self-critical one is when confronted with setbacks, failures, or other challenges
2. **Common humanity** versus **isolation**: the extent to which one accepts that failure, inadequacies, and mistakes are part of the human nature *rather than* an isolated “that only happens to me” approach
3. **Mindfulness** versus **over-identification**: the extent to which one is aware of and accepts negative feelings and experiences for what they are *rather than* over-identifying with thoughts and feelings of suffering or becoming absorbed in one’s reaction to this negative emotion

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Sustainable high-performance coaching through the lens of self-compassion

*A PhD- project in collaboration between The Swedish School of Sport
and Health Sciences (GIH) and The Swedish Sports Confederation (RF)
PhD-student: Karin Hägglund*



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The high demands on coaches in elite sport



DEMANDS OF SUCCESS IS AT
THE CORE OF ELITE SPORT



CHALLENGING WORKPLACE
ENVIRONMENTS



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Introducing self-compassion to high-performance coaches (HPCs)

- **The aim** of this study is to explore the concept of self-compassion among HPCs - their experiences and understanding of the concept as well as their perceptions of benefits and barriers of self-compassion practice in the context of elite sport.
- **Participants:** 9 Swedish HPCs: 1 female, 8 male
- **Age:** 53 on average, range 43-63
- **Sports:** team sport = 3; individual sports = 5; parasport = 1
- **Years of elite coaching:** 18 on average, range: 10–25
- **Number of European and World championships as a coach:** On average: $\leq 20 = 4$; $20 \leq = 5$. Range: 2-40
- **Number of Olympics/Paralympics a coach:** on average: 4, range: 1-7

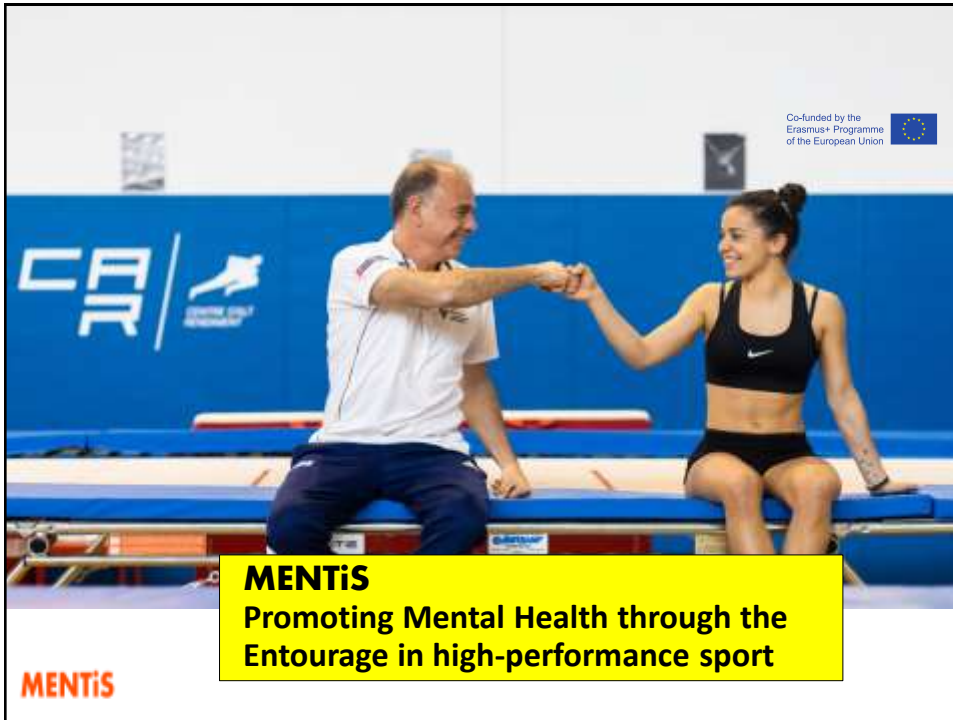
Preliminary analysis of individual interviews

No fear of self-compassion

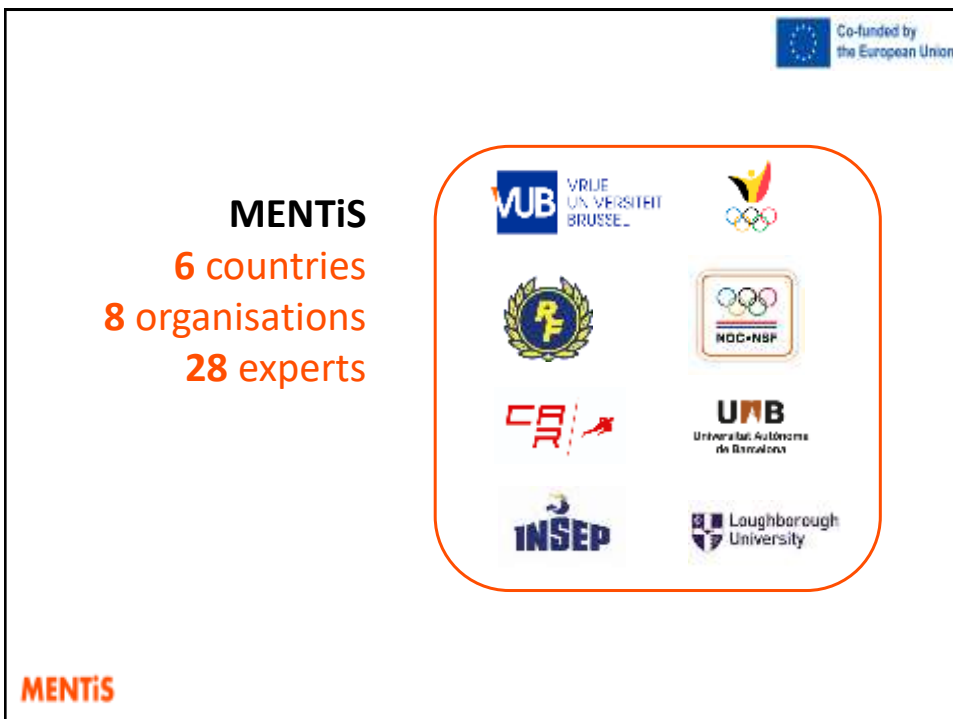
Valuable tool for high-performance coaches



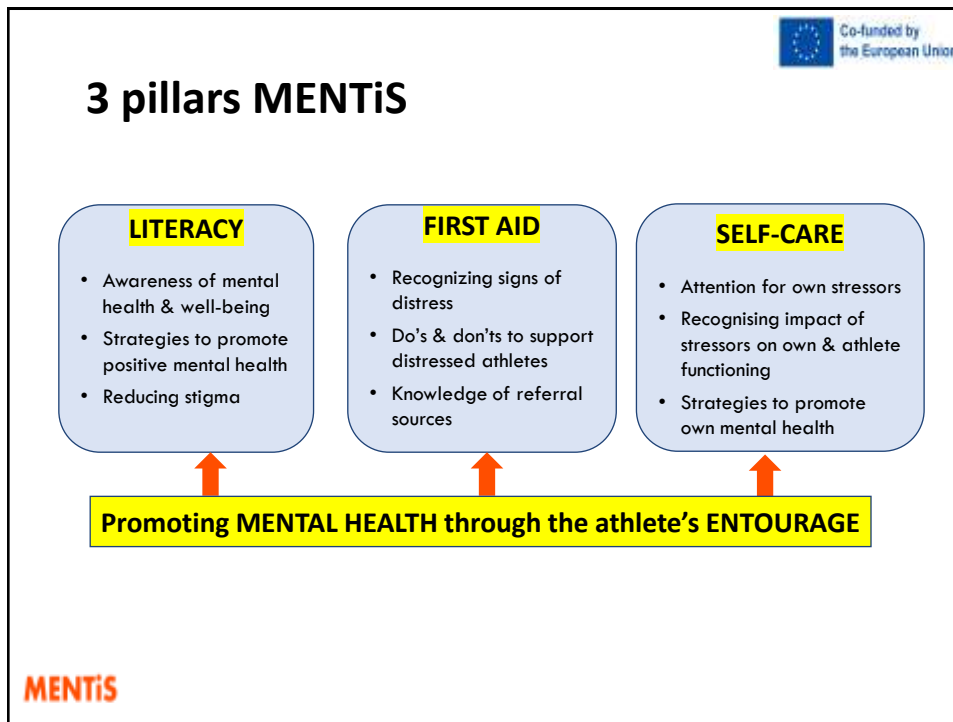
You have to take the "armour" off



15



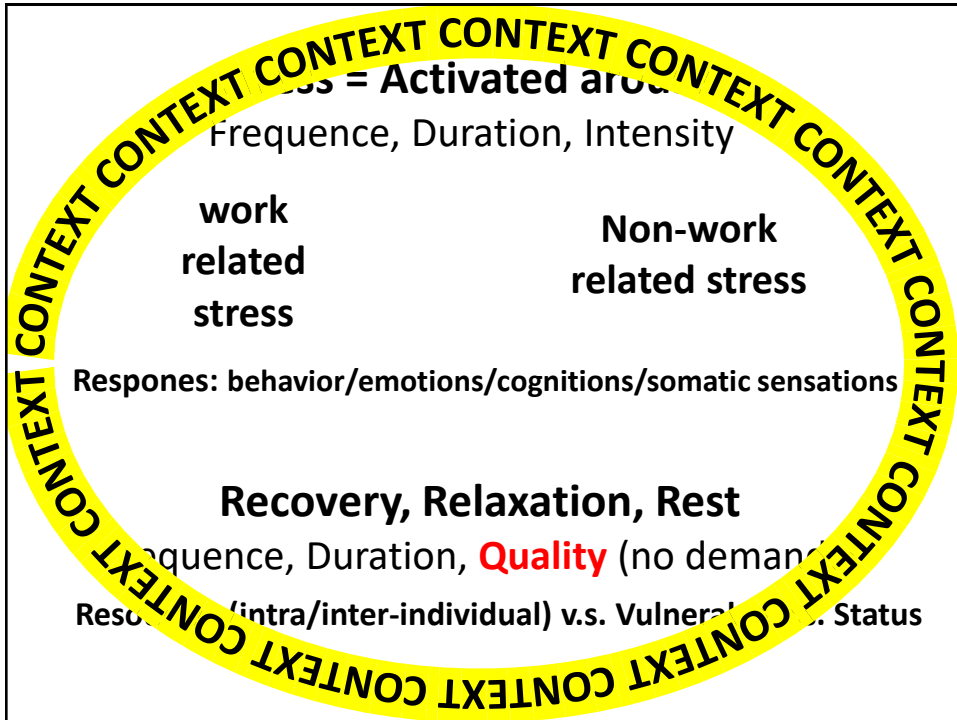
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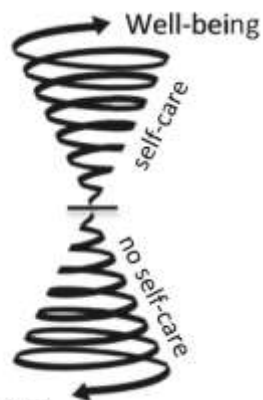
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How to combat stress

1. **Change**, reduce or eliminate the cause to stress
2. **Acceptance**, change the relationship to stress
3. **RECOVERY**, including sleep!
4. **Physical activity** + **mindfulness, acceptance and self-compassion**
5. **Mindfulness & self-compassion**

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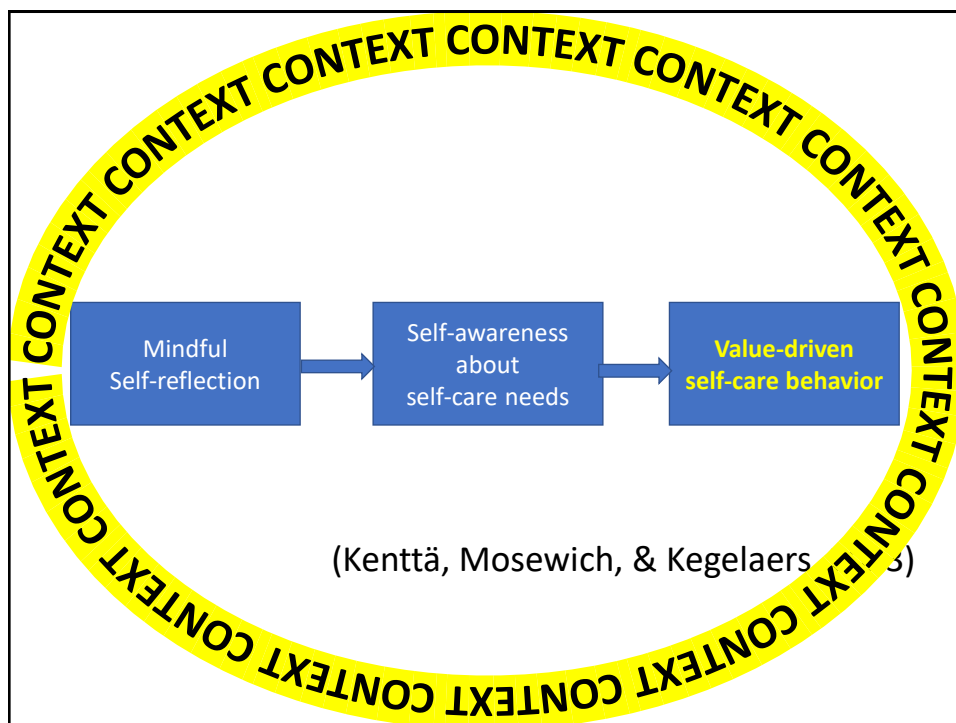
The role of **self-care** for **mental health** and **performance**



Negative Outcomes

Posluns & Lynn Gall, 2019

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**“Culture is defined
as the worst behavior tolerated”**

John Amaechi

“How much **pain and **suffering**
do I need to go through
in order to become successful?”**

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**“A safe, secure and sustainable environment in
high-performance sport... – does it exist?”**



**Perhaps elite sport is inherently unsafe
from a psychological perspective?**

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Reasons **Why Coaches Don't Seek Help** for Mental Health Problems???

An Australian study found **more than 40%** of coaches from Olympic sports reported mental health symptoms at a level that would warrant professional treatment, **but fewer than 6%** reported seeking treatment at the time (Pilkington et al., 2022).

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Psychological safety

A team climate where it is safe to take interpersonal risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.

A sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject or punish someone for speaking up.

(Edmondson, 1999)

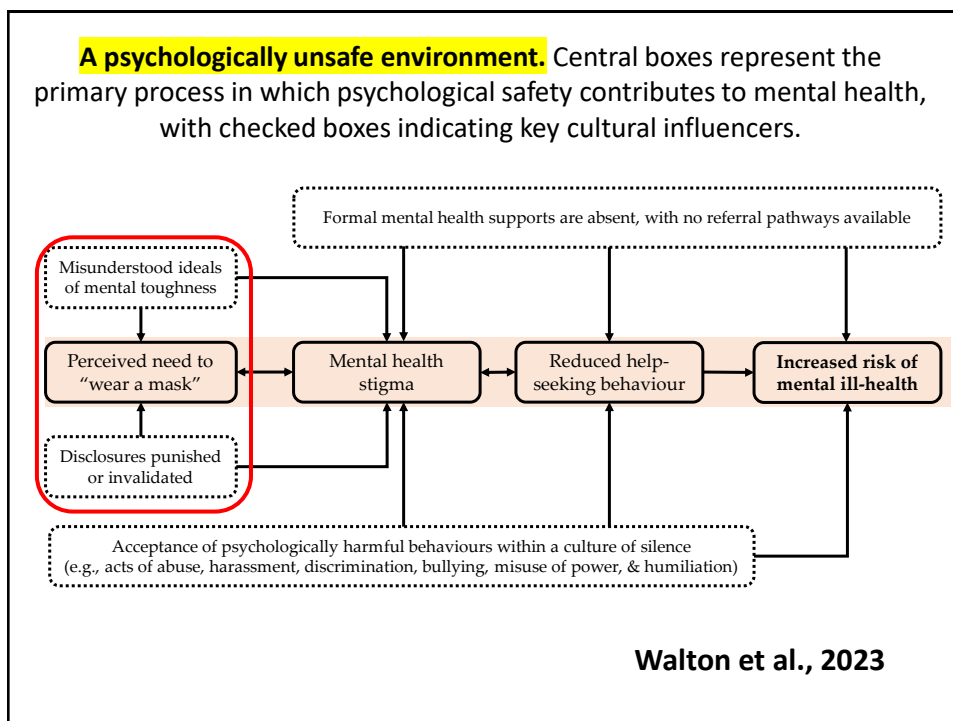
Max Martin om grupparbeten:

"Det grundläggande om man ska vara kreativ i en grupp är att skapa en trygg miljö. Alla måste våga presentera idéer utan rädsla för att bli hånad. På engelska säger man *dare to suck* - man måste våga vara jävligt dålig. Efter åtta dåliga idéer, så kan det ju vara den nionde idéen som lyfter. Man blir sitt bästa jag om man känner sig trygg."

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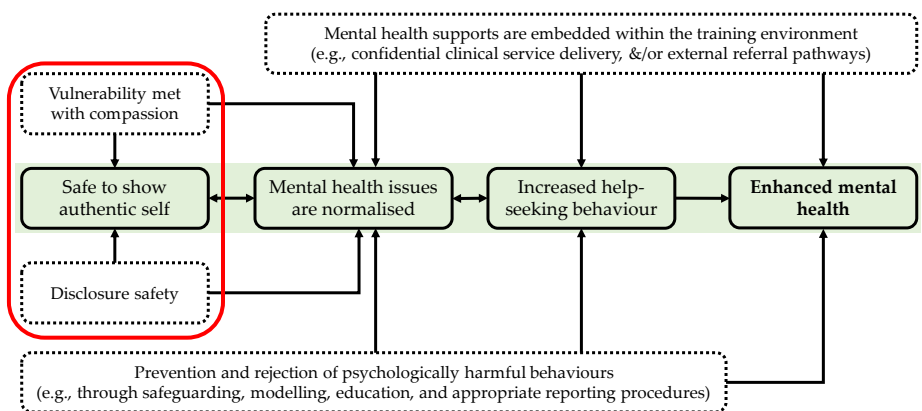


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A psychologically safe environment. Central boxes represent the primary process in which psychological safety contributes to mental health, with checked boxes indicating key cultural influencers.



Walton et al., 2023

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JOURNAL OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2023.2207481>

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

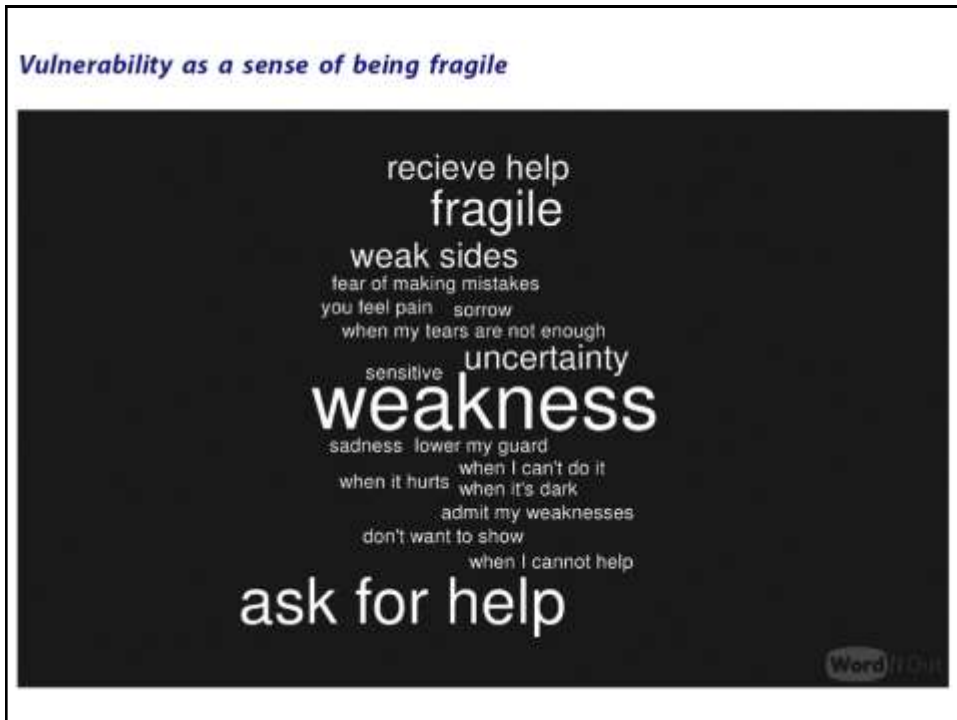
 OPEN ACCESS

 Check for updates

Starting a Conversation about Vulnerability in Elite Sport

Karin Hägglund^a , Christopher R. D. Wagstaff^b , Göran Kenttä^{a,c} 
and Richard Thelwell^b 

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Weakness

Vulnerability you say ...? That would be lowering my guard,
to ask for help, show a weak spot.

You see, I want to be able to do it all. Never ask for help.

The whole thing about receiving help makes me feel weak. Fragile.

Awakes fear,

of not being respected,

of doing it wrong,

of not being good enough.

Vulnerability you ask ...? I fake it, say that all is good even if I don't feel that way.

Don't want to show, when I'm fragile ...

uncertain,

when I can't do it,

when someone close to me is hurting,

when I cannot help,

when I feel pain and hurt, inside.

You know, when it's dark even though the sun shines.

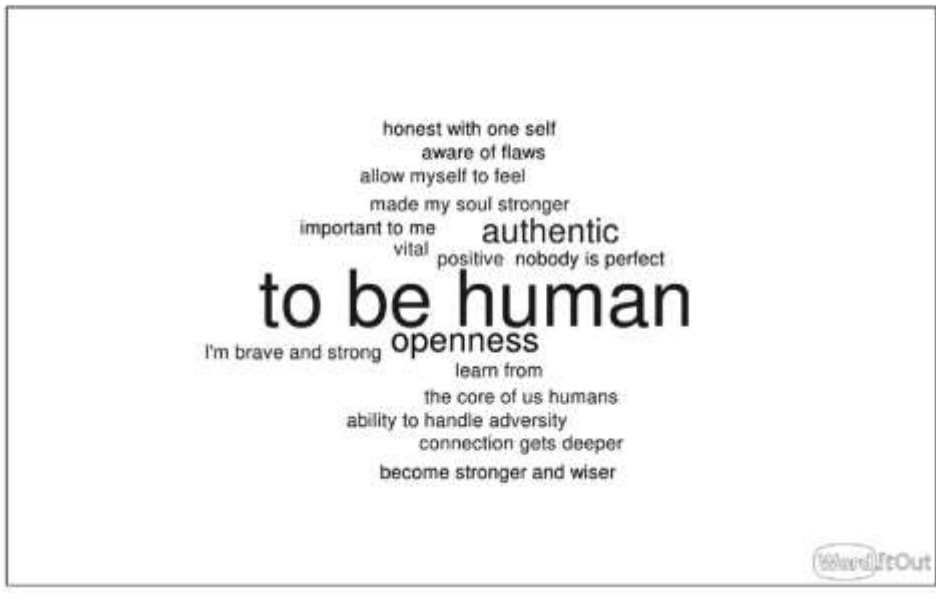
I guess I could ask for help when I am not enough,

admit my weaknesses.

Vulnerability you say ...? More difficult to explain than I thought.

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Vulnerability as a sense of being human



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To be human

Vital, that's what vulnerability is to me.

Allowing myself to feel,

being honest to myself about who I am, how I'm feeling.

Inviting my close ones into my core. Being authentic.

To put it simply, to be human, that's vulnerability.

We all have flaws, but also strengths, nobody is perfect, I'm at peace with that.

When I show my vulnerability, speak of my concerns, I sometimes feel uncomfortable, yeah, it's difficult at times to follow through.

But, I've noticed,

it is often received positively, with compassion,

connection with others becomes deeper. Authentic.

I grow inside.

When I show my vulnerability,

I feel brave and strong,

become stronger and wise,

I can handle failure, pain and suffering,

I learn from it.

The way I see it, being vulnerable is simply the core of being human.

Daring to be authentic.

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A sustainable performance culture

Joy and fun...

Recovery...

Health global...

Health mental...

Vulnerability...

Psychological safety...

Self-care...

Self-compassion...

Value driven behaviors...



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Thank you for your attention!



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